

Minutes

Metro Arts Commission Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Metro Southeast

1417 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37217



Commissioners Present: Campbell West (Chair), Tré Hardin (Vice Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Evan Brown, Brittany Cole, Camille Greer, Timothy Jester, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight, Mayra Yu, and Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director, *ex-officio*)

Staff: Vivian Foxx, Chuck Beard

Metro Legal: Macy Amos

A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

Chair Campbell West called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and welcomed attendees. A quorum was confirmed following roll call conducted by Vivian Foxx.

B. Public Comment

No written public comments submitted prior to the meeting and no in-person public comments.

C. Featured Artist – Patrick Shaffner

Chuck Beard introduced Patrick Shaffner, Deputy Director of Literature and Language Programs for Humanities Tennessee and mentor for the Community Arts Leaders of Nashville program. Mr. Shaffner shared highlights from his creative and professional background, including experiences with Hatch Show Print, his career as a teacher and improv performer, the Southern Festival of Books, and various artist collaborations.

D. Approval of Minutes: March 25, 2026

A motion was made to approve March 25, 2026, meeting minutes by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Kalil. Unanimous approval.

E. Action & Discussion Items

1. Public Art Committee Update

Commissioner West provided updates on behalf of the Public Art Committee, which did not meet in May. The NYCE lobby project with William Massey will begin community engagements in May and June. The Empowerment Collection selection panel will meet on May 1st. Omari

Booker's project at the Strobel House is nearing completion. Several maintenance cleanings have been completed and are underway on existing artworks.

2. Grants & Funding Committee Update

Commissioner Lefkowitz reported that the Grants & Funding Committee met twice since the last Commission meeting, on April 6 and April 13, 2026. The committee reviewed revisions to the FY27 Grant Review Panelist Guidelines, General Operating Support Grant Guidelines, and Thrive Project Grant Guidelines.

Jackie Hansom, Strategic Grants and Initiatives Manager, presented an overview of updates to the grants process and guidelines. She emphasized that revisions were informed by community feedback, grant check-ins, commissioner recommendations, and applicant experiences. Jackie shared an overview of new resources that will be available to applicants and a timeline of key dates. The Commission has three policies to approve, which were presented.

i. FY27 Grant Review Panelist Guidelines Approval (Action)

Jackie highlighted clarifying language in the panelist guidelines about criteria, the residency requirement, panelist expectations, and the application questions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lefkowitz to approve the FY27 Grant Review Panelist Guidelines and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed unanimously.

ii. FY27 General Operating Support Grant Guidelines Approval (Action)

Jackie provided an overview of the General Operating Support guidelines and highlighted new or key parts, including the preliminary application review, expanded applicant support, and restructured and revised scoring rubrics.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions and offered comments on topics including accessibility for applicants, technical support processes, application timelines and deadlines, and funding formulas.

A motion was made by Commissioner Knight to approve the FY27 General Operating Support Grant Guidelines and seconded by Commissioner Kalil. Motion passed unanimously.

iii. FY27 Thrive Project Grant Guidelines Approval (Action)

Jackie provided an overview of the Thrive grant guidelines, emphasizing elements that are specific to Thrive. Proposed updates to the Thrive guidelines include clarified information about

allowable project scope and allowable project types, applicant support resources, eligibility requirements, and fiscal sponsorship guidance.

Staff clarified that paid full-time executive level staff from organizations that received General Operating Support grants would be ineligible for Thrive funding. Ineligible project types were reviewed, including public art on public property and outdoor murals. Such public art projects need specialized review and approval requirements which are not currently part of the Thrive process. Updated details for allowable expenses were reviewed, including a contingency cap of \$500.

Additional discussion focused on fiscal sponsorship requirements and support resources. Staff shared that the proposed resource guide would include examples of different fiscal sponsorship structures and clarify expectations and common practices. Commissioners asked questions and offered comments about final reporting responsibilities and Metro Arts' role in fiscal sponsorship and artist relationships.

The updated rubric and scoring criteria were reviewed and discussed. Comments were offered about opportunities to strengthen branding and visibility for Thrive-funded projects.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lefkowitz to approve the FY27 Thrive Project Grant Guidelines and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed unanimously.

Director Bachelder provided an overview of the next steps in the approval process, noting that grant eligibility criteria would be submitted to Metro Council for approval in May. Commissioners were encouraged to attend Metro Council committee meetings.

3. Executive Committee Update

Commissioner West reported that the Executive Committee did not meet during the month due to scheduling conflicts. Planned discussion topics included establishing committee reporting processes. The Executive Committee will meet in May.

4. Advocacy & Engagement Committee Update

Commissioner Cole reported that the committee had met the previous day and continued discussion of its goals and framework. The committee focused significant discussion on goals about building the budget case and establishing Metro Arts as a cross-sector voice. Conversations included collaboration strategies, advocacy messaging, and strengthening partnerships across the arts ecosystem. Additional discussion included development of advocacy actions for the council budget hearing and longer process, including ways commissioners and community members can participate.

Staff shared additional updates related to artist storytelling and community engagement initiatives. Darius Barati provided highlights regarding recent public art coverage for the *Wings*

of Time installation at the Old Hickory Community Center, recent community engagement events, and storytelling projects featuring three grantees. Darius announced two upcoming events:

- Community Arts Leaders of Nashville luncheon on May 8 at Shelby Bottoms Nature Center.
- A combined General Operating Support and Thrive grantee celebration planned for June 15, 2026.

F. Chair's Report

Chair West reported meeting with HR Director Shannon Hall regarding planning for the upcoming Executive Director search process. HR representatives are expected to attend the May or June Commission meeting to provide a presentation regarding the search timeline, commissioner involvement, and hiring process.

G. Director's Report

Director Bachelder provided updates regarding FY27 budget process and dates, including the State of Metro on April 29, the Commission's council hearing on May 13, and the public hearing on the budget on June 2. She reminded Commissioners of the budget requests, including a 25% increase to the grants budget, increased funding for grant review panels, funding for restorative arts programming, and support for staff professional development. She reminded everyone that Metro Arts is still searching for a new office location. Regarding hiring, recruitment is underway for a Grants Coordinator, with anticipated hiring in late May.

H. New Business

No additional new business was brought forward for discussion.

I. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.